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A COPY of
Mr. Ashtons Paper,
Delivered to the
SHERIFF
AT THE
Place of Execution, *January 28. 1697.*

Mr. Sheriff,

HAVING observed that the Method of making Speeches at the Place of Execution was not always attended with the designed Successes; and thinking it better to imploy my last Minutes in Devotion and holy Communion with my God, I have prepared this Paper to leave in your Hands, as well to assert my Principles as to testify my Innocency.

As to my Religion; I profess, by God's Grace, to dye in the Faith into which I was baptized, that of the Church of *England*, in whose Communion (nothing doubting of my Salvation, through the Merits of my Saviour) I have always thought my self safe and happy: According to her Principles, and late much esteemed Doctrine (though now unhappily exploded) I have regulated my Life, believing my self obliged, by my Religion, to look upon my Rightful, Lawful Prince (whatever his Principles were, or his Practices might be) as God's Vicegerent, and accountable (if guilty of Male-administration) to God only, from whom he received his Power; and always believing it to be contrary to the Laws of God, the Church, and the Realm, upon any Pretence whatsoever, to take up Arms against him; And let all the World take Notice, in this Belief I dye. But I have more particular Obligations to the King my Master, whom I have had the Honour to serve, and received many signal Favours from him, for Sixteen Years past: So that Gratitude (a Thing not much esteemed at this time) as well as Duty and Religion, commanded the utmost Service I could pay him. And when I had these Considerations, That we were Born his Liege Subjects, That we had Solemnly professed our Allegiance, and often confirmed it with Oaths, That his Majesty's Usage, after the Prince of *Orange's* Arrival, was very hard, severe, and (if I may so say) unjust: And that all the new Methods of settling this Nation have hitherto made it more miserable, poor, and more exposed to Foreign Enemies: And the Religion we pretend to be fond of Preserving, now, much more than ever, likely to be Destroyed; There seems to me no way to prevent the Impending Evils, and save this Nation from Poverty and Distraction; but the calling home our injured Sovereign; who, as a true Father of his Country, has (notwithstanding all his Provocations

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cations and Injuries) a natural Love and Tenderness for all his Subjects. And I am so far from Repining at the loss of my Life, that had I Ten thousand I should rather think my self Obliged to sacrifice them all, than to omit any just and honest Means to promote so good and necessary a Work. And I advise and desire all my Fellow Subjects to think of their Duty, and turn to their Allegiance, before the severe Judgments of God overtake them, for their Perjury and Rebellion: But certainly the Good and Interest of these Nations, abstracted from all other Considerations, will ere long convince them of the Necessity of doing it.

Having thus frankly declared my Principles, I know the Inference will be, That I have Acted accordingly; and, consequently, that I am now justly Condemned: But as I ingenuously own the Inference, I as positively deny the Consequence; for whatever my Inclinations or Actions have been, yet, as to the Matter I was Sentenced to dye for, I declare my self Innocent. And I will appeal, even to the Judges themselves, whether or no, upon my Tryal, there appeared the least Proof that I knew a Tittle contained in the Papers: But Presumption was with the Jury thought sufficient to find me Guilty; though, I am told, I am the First Man that ever was Condemned for High Treason upon bare Suspicion or Presumption; and that contrary to my Lord Coke's, and other eminent Lawyers Opinions. The knowledge of my own Innocency, as to the Indictment and Charge against me, was that that Armed me with so much Assurance, and occasioned my calling my Life upon the first Twelve Men of the Pannel, without challenging any: But though I have, I think, just Reason to complain of the severe Charge given by the Judges, and hard Measure I have received, not to mention my close Imprisonment, the hasty and violent Proceedings against me, nor the Industry used in the return of fitting Persons to pass upon me, the denying me a Copy of the Pannel, &c.

Yet as I hope for Pardon and Forgiveness at the Hands of God, so do I most heartily pray for and forgive them, and all my Enemies, all the World; nay, even that Judge and Jury-man who did so significantly (contrary to common Justice) expose themselves to destroy me: But let the Will of God be done; I rely wholly upon his Mercy, and the Merits of my blessed Saviour, for Salvation; I do cheerfully and intirely resign my self into his Hands, as into the Hands of a faithful Creator, in sure and certain Hopes of a happy Resurrection.

Bless, protect and strengthen, O Lord God, my good and gracious King and Master: In thy due time let the Virtue, Goodness and Innocency, of the Queen my Mistress, make all their Enemies blush; and silence the wicked and unjust Calumnies that Malice and Envy have raised against her: Make her and these Nations happy in the Prince of Wales, whom, from unanswerable and undoubted Proofs, I know to be her Son: Restore them all when thou seest fit to their just Rights; And on such a Bottom as may support and establish the Church of England, and once more make her Flourish, notwithstanding what she hath received of late from her prevaricating Sons.

Forgive, forgive, O Lord, all my Enemies; bless all my Friends; comfort and support my dear afflicted Wife, and poor Babes; be thou a Husband and a Father to them; for their Sakes only I could have wished to have Lived, but pardon that Wish; O good God, and take my Soul into thy glorious Glory.

J. ASHTON.

